

Poem by Lo77

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Summary: How Bill faces reciting a poem in front of his classmates?

English is not my native tongue, so if you find errors, please send me a note! Thanks for reading, enjoy!

Poem

"...This it is and nothing more."

"Well done, Jonathan" said Mrs. Casey, showing the boy to his seat. "Now..." and she doubted. It was Bill's turn to continue with the poem. And Bill knew it. He was already looking at her, pleading silently to dismiss him, to make a private session for him after class. Mrs. Casey received the message and for a instant considered her options; but she had the firm belief that obstacles were made to be conquered, so she called him.

"William, come forward, please."

Bill gaze fell as he heard the mutters in the classroom.

"Man, this is going to take forever!" said Sam Davidson, who was known to complain about everything.

"Can-can-can I go to the bath-bath-bath-room?" said Gregory Brown in the back and all of them laughed. Because everyone knew Bill's stutter, or rather, everyone had *endured* Bill's stutter, which had gone from bad to worst, and knew they were in for a long, long boring ride.

Bill closed his eyes and took a deep breath as he was approached the front of the classroom. When he turned around, he focused on Eddie. Eddie thought Bill looked like a prisoner before execution; not that he had seen one, but how else would they look? Eddie looked back at Bill with pity, and Bill looked back at Mrs. Casey, who encouraged him to start with a smile.

"Presently my soul grew stronger. Just say it. C'mon, just say 'Presently my soul grew stronger,'" said Bill to himself. He took a deep breath, opened his mouth and started.

"P-p-p-p-p..." Bill paused to quickly brush the spittle that hanged from his lips, but apparently not quickly enough for Henrietta Matthews, who uttered a disapproving groan. He breathed again. "P-p-p-pre-preh...sen..t-t-t-ly my s-s-so-so-uhl ghe-ghe-grew s-s-s-stronger."

"There!" Bill thought with a cheer, but when he heard his classmates laughing, his heart sank to his gut. His face went red, not so much because of the effort of speaking, but because of shame. He looked at them with rage... it wasn't his fault that he couldn't speak right!

"His tongue is disconnected from his brain," said Gregory Brown, and all the class broke off in laughter. Eddie made an effort not to laugh.

Bill looked again to his teacher.

"Class, please, silence, please. Continue, William."

"Ok, Bill, just say it, 'hesitating then no longer', just say, 'hesitating', 'hesitating" thought Bill, but he already knew that "hesitating" wasn't going to come easy. Deep breath.

"H-h-heh-heh-hes..." pause. "Heh... hehs.."

The class started to giggle again; another funny comment from Gregory Brown and Mrs. Casey trying to make them shut up. But Bill wasn't listening to their laughter any more; he was listening to that unhealthy voice in his head that assured him he was a loser, and a stuttering freak. Eddie was looking at Bill; he saw how his shoulders slumped, how his gaze fell to the floor.

"C'mon Bill," whispered Eddie, not losing faith, "don't let them get you, Big Bill, you can do this!"

"I can't do this," thought Bill, feeling something he had never felt before. Later, he would learn that it was called impotence, but right now it just felt a lot like sadness and despair; no matter how hard he tried, he knew he was never going to say the poem right. And just as he was about to leave to his seat, defeated, the poem echoed through the marshes of his heart:

"Presently my soul grew stronger."

It was not the words, but the feeling that came rushing in, like a river resurrected by rains in spring. *"My soul is strong"* Bill thought... no, he didn't thought, he *remembered*. He had challenged the aberration that dwelled in the bowels of Derry. He had faced fear as none of his classmates, or even Mrs. Casey, had faced. The poem reminded him

of *him*. No stupid poem was going to put him down.

After a couple of seconds, Bill raised his gaze, straightened himself up, and turned to face the blackboard. He wrote in big letters "hesitating then no longer", and threw a quick defiant look at Mrs. Casey, who smiled back. Bill continued writing, with a smile, until he finished his part of the poem.

Take that!